

WILLIAM ALEXANDER MCDUGALL
1905-1982



The death occurred on 7th January 1982 of the retired Government Entomologist for Queensland and noted authority on native Muridae, Dr William Alexander McDougall. Mac had served as an Entomologist and Zoologist in the Queensland Department of Primary Industries for 45 years and after his retirement in 1971 was made an Associate of the Queensland Museum in which capacity he continued to work in Australian native rats especially *Melomys*.

Mac's zoological career commenced in 1926 when he was appointed to the Bureau of Sugar Stations at that time a branch of the Department of Agriculture and Stock (now Primary Industries). He trained as an entomologist under Professor Goddard in the Zoology Department of the University of Queensland and subsequently served at Meringa 1928-32 and Mackay 1932-49. Whilst at Mackay he undertook research on the range of insect problems in sugar cane including major work on wireworms which earned him the degree of MSc in 1934. However, following a period of study on rats at the University of Sydney his main interest became an investigation of the biology, ecology and control of the canefield rat (*Rattus conatus* Gould). For this

work he was awarded the degree of DSc in 1949 and acknowledged as the Australian authority on rodent ecology and control. Some of his early rat studies had also involved collaborative work with medical researchers on the control of Weil's Disease in canefield workers.

In 1949 he transferred from the Sugar Bureau to take charge of the Entomology Section within the Science Branch of the Department. During the next 22 years he was to make totally different but equally important contributions in entomology and zoology. He recruited and guided the work of a group of entomologists and zoologists who were to make agricultural entomology and native fauna research into the vigorous disciplines they are today in Queensland. He exercised a very personal style of leadership and all of his staff were actively encouraged to seek further training with the result that their record for higher degrees and scientific publications was outstanding. It was due in part to the high standards of experimentation he demanded but also to his superb skills as a scientific editor.

Parts of his Departmental duties involved service on interstate committees. He was often controversial but the minutes of these committees carry frequent evidence of the salutary effect of his comment. Most important would have been his contributions Australia-wide as a foundation member of the Committee of Commonwealth and State Entomologists. Within Queensland he was a member of the Agricultural Requirements Board from its inception in 1952. This Board carried the responsibility of regulating the use of pesticides within Queensland and he instituted and followed a rigid ethical code in the approval of insecticides.

Towards the end of his career Mac was able to expand his interest in vertebrate zoology by the formation of a zoology group within Entomology to work on native fauna. This group became the Fauna Branch of the Department of Primary Industries at his retirement and subsequently merged with National Parks to form the independent National Parks and Wildlife Service of Queensland. This provided him personally with the opportunity to develop his original interest in the Muridae, and after retirement he undertook a reorganisation of the Queensland Museum reference collection based on newly available chromosome and skeletal studies by members of his previous staff.

Mac was very much a Queenslander. He was born in Ipswich but raised in Goondiwindi although he returned to Ipswich for his secondary education as a boarder at the Ipswich Grammar

School. He excelled at sport and in his final year was a member of every school sporting team and captain of all but one. Later at the University of Queensland as a student of King's College his sporting prowess was again apparent with the award of the blues for cricket and football. In North Queensland he was similarly successful at inter-city cricket and tennis.

His personal interests were mainly his family, the staff who worked for him and their families, and sport, latterly as a spectator, but he participated in a wide range of community activities. To Mrs McDougall, their daughters and grandchildren we express our appreciation of Mac as a friend and mentor and of his contributions to his chosen discipline.

N.W. HEATHER.